

### Transcription - Dalmo Cirne Part 3

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Welcome back, I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is InsideExec. Today, we're concluding our conversation with Dalmo Cirne, and we're talking about leadership of the future. How we are training people who are coming through and thinking about being leaders, whether they're new to the workforce, or whether they're people who are moving from a position of being a subject matter expert into our management role.

The final question that we sent to you, we've kind of covered because it's all encompassing in terms of what you've talked about. It's about preparing leaders for the future. So the question was, are we preparing leaders of the future to think the way that you're proposing?

I'm going to go back to the beginning of our conversation, because one can say there are thousands of books out there on leadership and management, why the heck should I read yours? One of the fundamental differences is exactly what we were discussing, that the audience to those books are C level executives, vice presidents and so on. It skips or assumes that everyone knows what they are supposed to do, what are the necessary skills. And in order to prepare the future leaders, you have to start somewhere. Either as a student of business or someone transitioning from individual contributor into management, they need to know what are, what constitutes the roles, what are the skills necessary, what they should be investing. How do you write the SWAT, these strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats? Things like that, that we may take for granted, but they don't know, they never worked with that, but there are things that could be used on a daily basis or quarterly basis at the company.

Skipping that and then assuming that the person was not competent, that's a disservice for the person and to yourself, because for very long time that person may have been an excellent individual contributor, switch to management and now it's falling short. Whose fault is that? Is it that a person suddenly became deficient, doesn't know what to do, how to play, or maybe they lack these skills? So I think one way to prepare people from the future is it's on us not to let them fail. And not to let them fail is, we have to provide the knowledge and the education that they need so they can be successful. It becomes fundamental to organizations, regardless of the size, that they have something within the company framework that says, in terms of management and the ongoing management of the organization, we follow this path.

If I go back to my own experience when I first started working, organizations had management training schemes. You went for six months, 12 months, two years, whatever it was, you moved around all different departments. You got exposed to different styles of management, different types of management. There was formal training associated with it as well, before you moved through the organization at the next level. Then we saw a falling away of that approach and the introduction of mentors and mentoring programs and coaching and accountability partners. We seem to be very much in that role now, of looking at, this is how you provide management coaching. Is the best way for development, management development, by these individual programs rather than organizational programs?

So we're now looking at another change again in terms of management development in

organizations and saying we have to look at a very basic level. What the teams are, what the organization needs and adjusting that whatever development we do to those needs, rather than having, we manage by this style and this is how you will learn it and here's your certificate at the end of it.

Yeah, that is definitely a step in the right direction. But I would argue that even though well meaning and the right step, it still falls short. I like one anecdote from a Austrian philosopher called Karl Popper. He used to start his lectures, not all lectures, but some lectures, he would start and say "observe" and remain silent. At some point, one of the students would raise their hands and say "observe what?" He would say, precisely. You need to have prior knowledge so you know what to observe. If you don't have the prior knowledge, it doesn't mean anything to observe. Some of the trainings that are offered by larger companies or some books or technical institutions and all that, because people are so immersed in the day to day of management and leadership, there is a large assumption that the content they are presenting is already known by the people. What they need you to add is how they do things and so on. And because of that assumption, the teaching is well meaning, but still they're going to fall short. That's one of the things that I try to not overlook and be very explicit in the book, is not having that assumption of prior knowledge.

I just want to ask, on a personal level, I find it fascinating that you have this mathematical brain and these mathematical qualifications and you've moved into human resources and human resource management. Was there a trigger, first of all, and do you still prefer one over the other?

That's an awesome question. In my case, it was inevitable. There were things I wanted to do and I wanted to help build, I couldn't build myself. I could be the best mathematician and computer scientist in the world, still, there was too much for me to do, for any one person to do. I have to start looking at different levers that you can pull. How can you assemble a team? How can you rally people around the project or projects and build that? Then that triggers the need of, what does it need to manage people? What does it need to motivate people? What does it need to structure a project in a way that can be built by people and you can lead them? That was the beginning of my transition. Necessity is the mother of inventions or transitions. I needed to build something bigger than I could build myself. You have to learn a new scale, assemble a team, and the rest is history.

Is there something else? Is there something now that you're being drawn towards that you would like to do now that you've accomplished these things already?

Every time that you solve a problem, you don't stop there. Inevitably, by solving one problem, you create new ones. Those are better problems, but then you create new problems. You have new things to do. I do want to continue growing in my trajectory of leadership and management and learning and investing and tackling those new problems that are self-inflicted.

I know that you work with, across the board, with all sorts of industries, is there one that needs more work than others or some that really need to start lifting their game more than others?

We were talking about AI just a moment ago. I do think that there is an immense opportunity out there in things. For example, imagine that you are using a software to enter some data. You have, you're filling out the form and let's say you don't like the interface. You could use some AI to say, "I want to fill out the interface, create a UI for me the way I like, or mimicking the iPhone or Android, and organize the fields that are best suited for me to enter." A program no longer has to have an identity or visual identity or language that the company wants to offer you, but you can tailor things to you. You can start using AI systems that make the experience of completing the tasks that you have before you be so much more productive, be much more pleasant than what they are today. If you have vendors A, B, and C and you need them to a spreadsheet or app or fill out the form or you need to learn all those new interfaces, UI's and ways to interact with those systems. Instead, if you concentrate to them in an AI that learns about you more and more what to prefer, the AI can interface with those systems in the back and simplify the experience to you tremendously. You do what you need to do. You complete the tasks that you need to complete and you finish that in a way there are so much more pleasant than what it is today without having to switch context. "Oh, the UI in here, the button is on the left side, this one, the button is green on the top right", all those things can be simplified to be more human-friendly and less idiomatic to the flavors of each company. This is one area that I think is very interesting. It's much easier said than done.

We're getting there.

I'm sure you like a challenge. I'm sure you'll work towards it. Dalmo, we've had a wonderful conversation. Is there anything we haven't covered that you'd like to bring to the fore?

I think it's to continue the conversation around what does it mean to lead, what does it mean to manage? And that communication with teams, because there is a misconception that managers are telling people what to do, how to do, and so on. It gets a bad reputation as micromanagement and many other less than flattering names. Many times the role of a leader, the role of a manager is to communicate intent and then rally the team to accomplish that. Let me give an example that's very easy to understand, even though it's just a analogy. Imagine that we're hiking and the task is to get to the top of a particular mountain and say, "Hey team, tomorrow by noon, we have to meet at the top of that particular mountain." That's it. The intent was very clear, what needed to be done. Some people may say, "I love mountain biking. I'm going to get a bicycle and I'm going to go and I'm going to be there tomorrow at noon." Other people may like hiking. Some people may say, "I'm adrenaline junkie. I'm going to go on an airplane and I'm going to skydive and tomorrow noon, I'm going to be on top of that mountain." There are many ways to accomplish that task if the communication of intent was clear. In that case, each person decided to go a different way, yet the next day at noon, we all met on top of that mountain. A lot of leadership goes in that clear communication of intent, often giving the freedom and autonomy to the team to implement that the way they see best fit for that particular use case.

Just with that example, then when everyone's met on the top of the mountain the next day, the communication of how they all got there, is that as important as the fact that they all got there at the same time?

It could be, it's going to depend on the case, but it could be, because if one of the options was

clearly superior to others, it's a lesson that we may want to share with other people on the team. Some people may not want to adopt it later, but at least they got the knowledge that said this technique or this way of doing things was clearly superior, then sometimes they can make a choice of how to do things. There are a lot of educational journeys. Exactly.

There are endless ways out there, or the best tool for a job. In tech editors, there are people who are going to pick in computer science, that are tech editors. Some people are VIM or E-Max or Visual Studio Code, everyone's going to have their own flavor. In operating systems, there is Linux, there's Windows, there's Mac, and people go on, they argue endlessly what is the best one. I give you an example that involves a bias. We all claim to be unbiased, right? No one is unbiased. Of course we are, all of us over here, we are not biased, but how about when we are driving on a highway? Everyone who is driving slower than us is an idiot. Everyone who is driving faster than we are is a maniac. (Let's face it, everyone who drives on the other side of the road is just weird.) Precisely.

An example that the one about the mountain, there's so many many lessons in that. I was thinking, like in real life, when it's say, as the manager you said, "That's the instruction. We're going to be the top of the mountain by lunchtime tomorrow." Like you said, one of the things, I'm 100% sure the team will do when they get up there is say, "I didn't know you could come by plane. I didn't know you could come by bike." To me, that's assumptions made and the need to clarify. The leader knew, they said, "Oh, he or she did not care how they got there. They just needed to be there." Everybody assumed, "Oh, I must hike or I can go by plane." I think there's so much learning in that, is about how we communicate as leaders, but as individuals, how we clarify and not make assumptions and think that's what they meant.

We do thank you so much for your time and for sharing your expertise. I'm sure that you have given our listeners much to think about. If we get feedback, we'll certainly pass it on to you. We'll put the details about your book and about your website and the other information and how people can contact you and be in touch. Thank you for your time and your expertise and we wish you well and we will talk to you again in the future.

Absolutely. It was such a pleasure talking with you guys. I appreciate invitation to join this conversation. I really had enormous fun talking with you guys.

There we leave our discussion with Dalmo Cirne. We have had the best time talking about management streams and learning things along the way and hearing how he has approached the idea of management from a very different perspective. We hope that you have enjoyed that series. Join us next time for another topic. I'm Kim Baillie, she's for Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec.